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History Alive!



The Providence College Johannine Society Newsletter
Vol. III No. 2

Winter 2000

State House Tour: A Review by Keith Lewison

On Saturday, November 6th the Johannine Society took a tour of the Rhode Island State House; it was under the direction of a certain Mr. Ham, a generous volunteer docent. Along the tour – which Mr. Ham supplemented with original rhyming poetry – we all learned new facts about both the State House and Rhode Island's history and government.

The interior of the State House is beautifully designed; from the dome which is one of the five largest free standing structures of its type in the world, to the Senate and House chambers which are each intricately decorated. There is also a series of interesting busts around the second floor lobby which include individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr. Also, many historical paintings decorate the building – these include portraits of General George Washington and Rhode Island Revolutionary War hero Nathaniel Green. Both of these paintings are in the Governor's greeting room which is lavishly decorated. However, the most impressive object in the entire building is a giant chandelier which hangs within the huge dome. Also, we learned that it had recently been brought down in order to replace many of the light bulbs so that it would be fully functional for Senator John Chafee's funeral. Finally, as we left through the Smith Street exit we couldn't help but notice a surviving cannon from the Battle of Gettysburg staring us down. Overall, we learned that Rhode Island's beautiful Capitol which we often pass by holds many treasures behind its heavy wooden doors.

In addition to the opportunity to view the building in all its glory we had the benefit of Mr. Ham retelling much of Rhode Island history to us. This was most interesting for it was supplemented with many of his colorful insights into Rhode Island and Rhode Islanders. For instance, I learned at least two new interesting facts about Rhode Island, first, that Rhode Island is the only state in the Union which does not have a balance of power, instead the legislative branch runs the entire show possessing the power both to overrule the Governor and appoint judges. The other fact is that Rhode Island has more different types of licence plates than any other state. Finally, special thanks to Mr. Ham for sharing his time.

Fall Movie Night: A Review by Keith Lewison

On Wednesday, December 1st the Johannine Historical Society had its first Movie Night. The film viewed was *The Informer* which is a famous Irish history film and was precluded by an introduction to the film's setting and historical background by Irish history expert Professor O'Malley.

This film by legendary director John Ford is a melodramatic 1935 classic. The action is very loosely based on Liam O'Flaherty's novel of the same name. The story is fascinating in that the entire plot transpires in one twelve-hour period. In this time the slow-witted Gypo Nolan, wonderfully played by Victor McLoughlin, snitches on his comrade-in-arms, Frankie, in order to gain the twenty pounds reward which he needs for he and his girlfriend's passage to America. However, he recklessly spends the money and is brought before an IRA tribunal accused of treason. He is then mortally shot while fleeing his former comrades and drags himself to dramatically die in front of a church altar – but not before being forgiven by Frankie's mother.

This interesting film gives insight into the social conditions in Ireland after the turn of the last century. And furthermore, it represents an age and art of film which has been long lost to our generation. The melodramatic scenes and sparse script accompanied by dark foggy "Dublin" streets speak to us of a bygone era.

Service Project: A Review by Joe Creamer

On Saturday, November 4th, a small, but hard-working group of Johannine Society members completed a project to benefit the Providence Preservation Society's Revolving Fund, which is committed to developing abandoned property into homes for less fortunate families, while maintaining their historical value. Working in tandem, they removed trash and debris, raked leaves and eliminated a mysterious concrete pediment. Our

volunteers were assisted by three honorary members, Caitlin Condon, Pat Ferrucci and Oscar Mayorga. We thank them and all those who helped to make this day a success.

Museum of Work and Culture: A Review by Keith Lewison

On Saturday, February 5, the Johannine Society accompanied Professor Manchester and many of her students to the Museum of Work and Culture, in Woonsocket. The museum run by the Rhode Island Historical Society opened within the last couple of years and is constantly being added on to. Furthermore the museum and Woonsocket itself are part of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, which was established by the Federal government but is run jointly by Rhode Island and Massachusetts. This "Federal Park" runs from Worcester to Providence and is dotted with many historic places and museums.

The Museum of Work and Culture is itself concerned with the industry of the area from the Industrial Revolution on, and more importantly the immigrants who made it all possible. Primarily, the museum focuses on the French Canadians who were recruited off their farms in Quebec during the Civil War years. Here they were able to make as much in one month as they did in a whole year farming in Canada. By the turn of the century seventy percent of the Woonsocket area was French Canadian.

The museum also concerns it self with the rise of the labor movement in the area – making its peak in the 1930's with the Independent Textile Union, recreates a French Canadian farmstead, a local church, mill conditions, tenement housing, and local parochial schools. Overall, it was a very nice museum which gives great insight into the lives and conditions of the local factory workers from the Industrial Revolution through the Depression Era, til the present day. It is a must visit for anyone interested in the local history.

Upcoming Events:

On March 13 or 14 (date still to be confirmed) Dr. Nan Sumner-Mack of the History and Black Studies Depts will speak on the topic of the black Muslim movement in the United States. Next year, she will be teaching a two semester course covering African-American history up to the present. She is interesting in meeting students who may consider taking her class. This will certainly be an evening no one would want to miss.

In April, we are considering a trip to the John F. Kennedy Museum and Library in Dorchester, MA. We will be renting a bus on a Saturday morning for this purpose. Please look for more information soon.

Check out our bulletin board for upcoming events and pictures and reviews from last semester. It's located in lower Slavin near the book store. If you have any suggestions, please let us know. It's your club! All suggestions will be taken seriously. Call any one of our officers:

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Treasurer, Brendan Lefebvre, x4355
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